

Dear Federal Communications Commission:

I have recently learned that the Federal Communications Commission will be making a decision regarding AT&T's avoidance of more than half a billion dollars in obligations owed for its prepaid calling cards. I am expected to pay all of my bills on time and in full. Please hold AT&T to this same standard and reject the company's self-serving scam. It is important that if there are established fees, surcharges or taxes that all organizations should be assessed equally and penalties exist for those who elect not to comply with the existing rules.

The inclusion of an advertisement should not change the basic service and free it from all fees, surcharges and taxes. We are already facing a funding crisis in the USF program and to allow AT&T to stop paying will only make that crisis worse. If allowed to continue, how will we prevent the next RBOC or IXC from making the same decision.

I am also concerned about AT&T's decision not to pay for its callings cards' use of local telecommunications networks. The industry is in transition with a number of new and unregulated competitors. The failure to pay the local charges jeopardizes the ability of local telecommunication networks to gain a fair return on their investment. This in turn impacts their ability to successfully approach the capital markets to fund the broadband deployment. As these companies fall into a deeper cost containment mode to make up for the lack of these funds, broadband deployments will be delayed or cancelled, maintenance cycles extended and service levels impacted. Again, same rules for all.

Perhaps most disgraceful is AT&T's excuse: If it has to pay its bills, then it has to raise the price of its calling cards. Don't buy into this veiled threat. Today's marketplace does not allow AT&T to deliver on this threat. The market will determine the price and AT&T will adjust to these market factors.

I urge the Commission to reaffirm that AT&T's prepaid calling card service is what it is: a telecommunications service. I ask you to require AT&T to pay what it owes to universal service and for use of local telecommunications networks-more than half a billion dollars, plus applicable penalties. And, I encourage you to act swiftly, so that other companies don't follow AT&T's bad example. Please act now!

Sincerely,

Harry Cook
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